

# Braves Capture

# Title Crown

The Chowan Braves have won their first conference championship in the school's history, but Coach Jerry Smith wants to delay any celebration until after the playoffs. The Braves wrapped up the Eastern Tarheel Athletic Conference championship with their 87-61 victory at Lenior Community College in January.

In his first year at Chowan, Smith may be as excited as fans over the conference championship. But he doesn't fuss now for fear his players will be distracted from their next major goal of qualifying for the regional tournament. To do that, Chowan must capture the conference tournament championship.

At Chowan, Smith is continuing the success he enjoyed at Bertie Senior High School. Over a 10-year span, his teams won 167 games and lost 42. He led Bertie to the state playoffs four years and his undefeated 1970 squad won the state championship.

Several holdovers have helped the Braves compile a 16-3 record this season. But the team's top four scorers are all freshman, including three North Carolina all-East players Smith recruited. They are forwards Ronald Williams of Union High in Clinton, William Bogues of Camden, and Greg Dawson of Kinston.

Freshman guard Robin Hoey of Shelby came to Chowan as a "walk-on" after spurning an offer to play at a small senior college. Hoey made four phone calls to Smith and the admission office to convince them he could help Chowan's basketball program.

Smith doesn't regret that he invited Hoey to tryout. He has developed into a starter who shares the quarterback position with Camden's Robert Gregory.

Williams is the team's leading scorer with a 14-point average. He's followed by Bogues with 13 points and Dawson and Hoey with 12 each.

Sophomore George Drawhorn and 6-7 Randolph Bell of Moyock, a senior college transfer, have shared play at center to give strength on the boards. But the 6-1 Bogues is the team's leading rebounder. "He can leap out of the gym," explains Smith.

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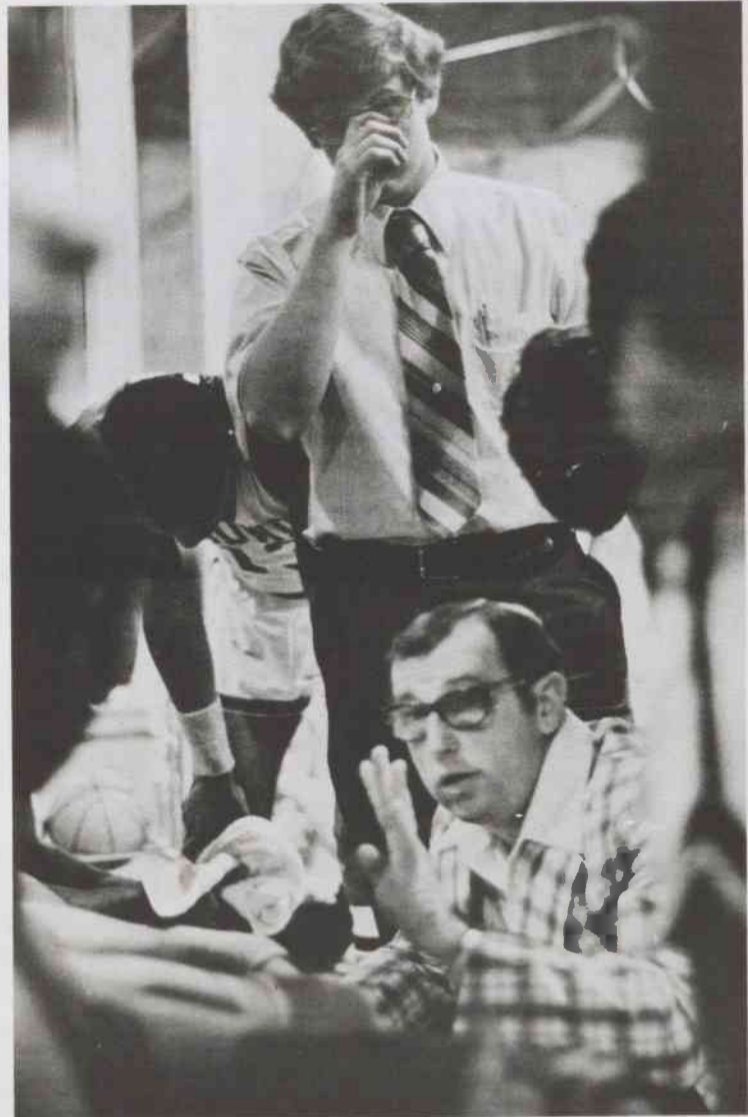
Smith's team has produced an exciting brand of play that is attracting more fans. Hoey and Gregory lead the fast break with poise. Chowan has scored over 100 points in five games. But Smith continues to drum defense into his players heads. During a home game against arch-rival Ferrum, Chowan employed a number of different defense. Smith said this kept Ferrum off-balance and was a key factor in the Braves' 71-62 win.

The team has shown an ability to win the close games. They have played in nine games decided by three points or less, and won seven. The Braves have won all three games they have played in overtime, including two in double overtime.

Braves fans insist Smith's coaching has accounted for several wins.

With only a one or two-point lead, Smith has followed the lead of another North Carolina Smith—the famed Dean at Chapel Hill. But Chowan's for corners is strictly a stall, with the ball passed from corner to corner and little emphasis on dribbling. Against both Ferrum and Frederick Military Academy, the Braves used this strategy to attract fouls that broke open close games.

Smith substitutes freely, sometimes one entire unit for another. All of the 16 players consistently see action and con-



Coach Jerry Smith instructs his players who won the first conference basketball championship in the history of the college. The coach is serving his first year as a member of the faculty and head basketball coach.

tribute to the Braves' cause. Smith believes this has helped to generate high team morale.

The players are quick to praise Smith for his coaching ability and genuine interest in his players. "He's a great coach," commented Hoey. "He commands the respect of the players. We know he's interested in our welfare and what's best for the team and the players."

Smith and his wife, Linda, are continuing a tradition they started at Bertie. Before each game, Mrs. Smith bakes a cake. If the Braves win, she serves her husband, family and friends who gather at Smith's house after the game.

Smith is pleased with the fan support, including increased interest from the community. Fans are crowding the small gym and Smith said he was looking ahead when the college will provide a new gymnasium-physical education center.

With a conference championship and 10 returning players as a nucleus for next year's team, the coach believes before too long he'll need every one of the 2,500 seats in the new gym to accommodate Chowan's fans.